



**Soy Aquaculture Alliance (SAA)  
FY2024 Research Program  
Social license in Offshore Aquaculture**

**Contract Number:** Contract\_44211\_Aquaculture Social License\_FY2024\_Final

**Amount of Award:** \$99,988.00

**Project Title:** Phase II Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Engagement for Offshore Aquaculture Opportunities for South Florida

**Recipient:** Gulfstream Aquaculture, LLC

**Award Period:** 01/01/2024 thru 12/31/2024

**Period Covered by this Report:** 01/01/2024 thru 2/29/2024

**Summary of Progress and Expenditures to Date:**

**Background:**

In 2023, Ocean Era, Inc. and Gulfstream Aquaculture, LLC (Business) have proposed and initiated the preliminary siting analysis for a potential future commercial aquaculture operation in South Florida. The Center for Food Integrity (CFI) approached the organizations and presented a novel concept employing a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) as a process to build trust among critical stakeholders. This approach to stakeholder outreach engages key community leaders/residents early in the business development to ensure that existing community values and expectations concerning a new venture in that community, and in this case, building a new offshore aquaculture industry for South Florida and the USA are transparently considered. This enables the new business to make informed decisions respectful of the community and fosters a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the intended business.

CAPs are a structured process for building relationships, sharing information, and resolving concerns that help align community expectations with company or organization performance. The goal of the CAP is to reduce the gap between performance and expectations through a structured process of identifying community concerns and discussing how they might be addressed. The first step was for CFI to identify (via invitation only) approximately 15 leaders/residents in the community, those considered to be driving change. Individuals were confirmed based on their commitment to the process, a willingness to serve as conduits for sharing information (community concerns), and their ability for raising questions and issues in a constructive manner. In the ensuing 6 months, the CAP participants met monthly at local area conference rooms for 90-minute sessions (lunch provided), facilitated and moderated by CFI. Leadership from the Business also attended. The United Soybean Board and the Soy Aquaculture Alliance provided the funding to CFI to conduct the Phase I CAP for the Business.

The results of this initial phase were extremely successful, such that the Business wanted to retain the engagement and participation of the original, plus expanded panel participants, for another year to enhance the social license for aquaculture production in South Florida. CAP participants are invited via invitation only and provide their time on a pure voluntary basis. Names and contact information of the CAP participants are held in strict confidentiality; they, their organizations, and the outcomes of the CAP meetings are purposely not made public in any social or other electronic media platforms.

### Reporting Period Work Accomplishments:

The summary of work accomplishments that follow, were derived from the 03/15/24 CFI Report 1 to, and supplemented, by Gulfstream Aquaculture (Dennis Peters). In January 2024, nine (9) of the original 2023 participants were identified and confirmed to take part in a 2024 Phase II CAP facilitated by CFI, with the stated objective: The CAP participants would work together to identify local questions, interests, and expectations to help foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the intended Business. Additionally, CFI identified and confirmed three new participants for a total of twelve (12) individuals. These South Florida residents represent the following affiliations/backgrounds:

- College professors (2)
- Non-profit coral propagation representative
- Fire inspector
- Moving & storage small business owner
- Non-profit fishing foundation representative
- USACE, Army Corps of Engineers retiree
- Local school district education foundation representative
- Commercial fishman & fish house/restaurant owner
- Family-owned grocery store owner
- Boy Scouts Sea Base (STEM) representative
- Retired U.S. Coast Guard personnel

The dates, timing, and location for a total of six (6) bimonthly (every other month) meetings were determined with input from the CAP participants, hotel availability, Gulfstream Aquaculture, and CFI staff, as well as consideration to local community events. The following dates are now confirmed at a local hotel conference facility (12:00 to 1:30 PM): CAP #1, February 29; CAP #2, April 11; CAP #3, June 20; CAP #4, August 15; CAP #5, October 10, and CAP#6, December 12.

The CAP #1 meeting featured Dennis Peters, CEO/President of Gulfstream Aquaculture, providing a project update and discussion of the offshore aquaculture opportunities for the South Florida sites. Mr. Peters shared operational updates and accomplishments since the group had gathered in 2023 including details of a Seafloor Survey Analysis to validate current speeds via an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP). Gulfstream Aquaculture has engaged NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) as well as University of New Hampshire's (UNH) School of Marine Science and Ocean Engineering to calibrate a ROM model and validate the ADCP data, and provide analyses for developing a 15 to 20 year forecast of current speeds, significant wave heights, and wave periods data for the project site.

The following video of the Mauritius Redfish was also shared to provide further background and context for the type of fish that is proposed to be raised. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB7\\_K3hyT-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB7_K3hyT-Y).

The interest in this aquaculture project was evident by the multiple questions and rich discussions that occurred at the meeting. There is a strong interest in understanding the proposed project, timeline, and its effects on the local economy and community. The second half of the meeting was facilitated to gather and prioritize the key topics/questions/areas of concern from the CAP participants. Many of the original 2023 areas of interest were once again prioritized during the CAP #1 meeting. As performed during the 2023 Phase I CAP meetings, CFI and Gulfstream Aquaculture will identify third-party, subject matter experts (SMEs) to attend the remaining CAP meetings to address the topics of interest identified by the CAP participants.

The outcome of that CAP #1 exercise to prioritize areas of interest is summarized by the following:

- 1) What will the impact be on water quality/ocean health? (environmental impact is a top priority)
- 2) What will the impact be on the local fishing industry (commercial/recreational/local fisheries)?
- 3) What are the labor needs of this facility, where will they come from and where will they live? (available housing is a serious challenge)
- 4) Where will the fish go?(product marketing, distribution, and sales)
- 5) What is the project timeline and process for permits and approval?

**Next Reporting Period Work Objectives:**

CAP #1 participants input, discussions, and identified priority areas, will guide the planning for CFI and Gulfstream Aquaculture to identify of SMEs to attend and address these areas of interest during the future planned CAP meetings. Mr. Chris Schillaci, Research Marine Ecologist with NOAA | National Ocean Service (NOS) and the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), Marine Spatial Ecology Division, has already been confirmed to speak at the CAP #2, April 11 meeting to address water quality effects.

**Reporting Period Expenditures:**

The expenditures across the proposal subcategories are provided in a subsequent Gulfstream Aquaculture invoice to SAA:

No issues are currently anticipated. As such, Gulfstream Aquaculture will continue to coordinate closely with CFI staff to ensure overall project schedule milestones and objectives are on track with the originally proposed activities and expenditures for the successful completion of the project.

Prepared By:  03/16/2024  
Signature of Principal Investigator Date